DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 420 789 CE 076 764

AUTHOR Imel, Susan

TITLE Spirituality in the Workplace. Trends and Issues Alerts.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Columbus, OH.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 1998-00-00
NOTE 4p.
CONTRACT RR93002001
AVAILABLE FROM ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Ohio State University, Center on Education and Training for Employment, 1900 Kenny Rd., Columbus, OH 43210-1090.
PUB TYPE ERIC Publications (071) -- Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; Corporations; Employer Employee Relationship; *Employment Practices; *Organizational Change; Organizational Climate; *Religious Cultural Groups; *Religious Factors; Trend Analysis; *Work Environment
IDENTIFIERS *Spirituality

ABSTRACT

The "spirituality in the workplace" movement serves a range of interests, including personal fulfillment on the job, a growing need to reconcile personal values with those of the corporation, and corporate desires to help individuals achieve more balanced lives. In addition to being the theme at a growing number of conferences, spirituality has also been the subject of online computer discussions and numerous books. Among the factors that have converged to create the spirituality in the workplace trend are the following: corporate layoffs and downsizing, the aging of the work force, the decline of traditional support networks, and changes in organizational structures. One of the most important issues associated with the growing movement of spirituality in the workplace is whether the movement is compatible with the profit motive that is the goal of most businesses and what happens when the two conflict. The relationship between spirituality and religion is another important issue. Career educators and career development specialists can prepare people for a workplace that includes a spiritual dimension by using the integrated life planning model and the relational approach to careers. (Includes an annotated bibliography of 20 print, organizational, and electronic resources, which comprises more than half of the document.) (MN)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 420 789

Spirituality in the Workplace
Trends and Issues Alerts

Susan Imel

ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education
Center on Education and Training for Employment
College of Education
The Ohio State University
1900 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1090

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CE076 764

TRENDS AND ISSUES ALERTS
by Susan Imel 1998
ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education

Spirituality in the Workplace

Although not easily defined, the spirituality in the workplace movement is about "acknowledging that people come to work with more than their bodies and minds; they bring individual talents and unique spirits" (Leigh 1997, p. 26). The movement serves a range of interests including personal fulfillment on the job, a growing need to reconcile personal values with those of the corporation, and corporate desires to help individuals achieve more balanced lives (Laabs 1995; Leigh 1997; McLaughlin 1998). One evidence of this trend is the growing number of Bible study and prayer groups like the one that meets every Thursday at noon at the Penn National Insurance Company in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. According to some estimates, in the past 10 years, groups like these have doubled to 10,000 (McLaughlin 1998).

The emergence of spirituality in the workplace as a trend has been noted in a wide variety of publications, including the *Christian Science Monitor* (McLaughlin 1998), *Mother Jones* (Moskowitz 1997), *Training and Development* (Leigh 1997), and *HR Magazine* (Brandt 1996). Not only is spirituality in the workplace a theme at a growing number of conferences, it has also spawned online computer discussions and is the subject of numerous books (Brandt 1996; Kahnweiler and Otte 1997; McLaughlin 1998). This *Alert* reviews reasons behind the trend and highlights some of the issues that surround it.

A number of factors have converged to create the spirituality in the workplace trend including the following:

- Corporate layoffs and downsizing. The recent "rightsizing" of many corporations has created uncertainty and made many people feel vulnerable about losing their jobs. Fewer support staff and the need to master new technology have created additional stress. As a result, many are asking questions about the value of their work and are seeking strength and solace in spirituality (Brandt 1996; Leigh 1997; McLaughlin 1998).
- The aging of the work force. Many employees have reached a level of affluence that permits them the luxury of seeking more meaning in their lives, including in their work (Brandt 1996; McLaughlin 1998). Although baby boomers are frequently credited for the connection between spirituality and work, the search for meaningful work spans all generations (Leigh 1997).
- The decline of traditional support networks. Several traditional sources of spiritual support such as churches, civic groups, and extended family now have less influence. Many individuals look to their workplace as a communal center to provide the basic human needs of connection and contribution (Brandt 1996; Mirvis 1997).
- Changes in organizational structures. Changes in how businesses are structured and run have also contributed to this trend. The quality movement, learning organizations, and other innovations have all fostered employee input and encouraged team building. As a result, many employees have experienced work environments that are more congruent with their personal values and have found new meaning in their work (Gozdz 1995a; Laabs 1995; Mirvis 1997).

Several issues are associated with the growing movement of spirituality in the workplace. The first and most prevalent has to do with whether it is compatible with the profit motive that is the goal of most businesses and what happens when the two conflict. In some companies, emphasizing values has proven profitable in measurable ways (Leigh 1997), but Moskowitz (1997) believes that the movement is more about personal than corporate transformation and suggests that, in the end, the profit motive will prevail.

The relationship between spirituality and religion is another issue. Many managers are leery of the trend toward spirituality in the workplace because they see it as connected to organized religion and fear that it may lead to legal difficulties. People don't want to be forced into any particular belief system (Brandt 1996; Laabs 1995). Mirvis (1997, p. 197) points out, however, that "religion is about answers [and] spirituality is about questions," thus supporting the idea that the spirituality in the workplace movement is not about any particular belief or religious system (Laabs 1995) but about creating a different kind of workplace.

The trend of spirituality in the workplace will likely continue as "the challenge for corporations in the 21st century is to create a nurturing environment that invites people to tap their creativity and productivity and find personal fulfillment through their work" (Barrett 1997, p. 3). Career educators and career development specialists will need to prepare people for a workplace that includes a spiritual dimension. The integrated life planning model (Hansen 1997) and the relational approach to careers (Hall et al. 1996) are examples of how this can be accomplished.

Resources

Barrett, Richard. "Mega Trends for the Future of Work: Building a Successful Corporate Climate." [1997] http://users.aol.com/soulspirit/text/univers.htm

Describes the shift that is taking place in the underlying values and assumptions that govern society and how it is affecting corporate leadership. Corporate leaders are now responsible for establishing a values-drive culture that will create a nurturing environment. A list of seven evolutionary behaviors of successful corporate culture is included.

Bierema, Laura L. "Development of the Individual Leads to More Productive Workplace." *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* no. 72 (Winter 1996): 21-28.

A holistic approach to individual development within the context of a learning organization produces well-informed, knowledgeable, critically-thinking adults whose decisions contribute to organizational prosperity.

Bolman, Lee G., and Deal, Terrence E. *Leading with Soul: An Uncommon Journey of Spirit*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995.

Organized around conversations between a beleaguered company leader and a wise sage, this book tells a story about making sense of confusing riddles that technical knowledge cannot solve.

Brandt, Ellen. "Corporate Pioneers Explore Spirituality." *HR Magazine* 41, no. 4 (April 1996): 82-87.

Examines the movement to make corporations a friendlier, more creative environment by tapping into the spiritual side of employees and the trends leading up to it..

Briskin, Alan. ***The Stirring of the Soul in the Workplace***. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996.

The question, "How organizations can better reflect the whole human being?" forms the basis for this book that examines how work and people have been fragmented from the soul (defined by the author as multiplicity of selves within each individual). The three parts of the book explore the idea of soul, address the challenges to the soul in past organizational practices and in today's workplace, and explore a new way of looking at organizational role.

Gozdz, Kazimierz, ed. ***Community Building: Renewing Spirit and Learning in Business***. San Francisco: Sterling and Stone, 1995a.

This collection of essays represents a variety of perspectives on what it will take to renew a sense of community with each other. Starting with the global context, the book shifts to the corporate community. Included are skills and practices for developing community, the interpersonal dimensions, modern technology and its usefulness, and case histories where benefits of community have been realized.

Gozdz, Kazimierz. "Creating Learning Organizations through Core Competence in Community Building." In ***Community Building: Renewing Spirit and Learning in Business***, edited K. Gozdz. San Francisco: Sterling and Stone, 1995b.

Examines core competencies in building learning communities and discusses the connection between learning, community, and spirituality. Asserts that learning, community building, and spiritual growth are interdependent.

Hall, Douglas T. et al. ***The Career Is Dead–Long Live the Career. A Relational Approach to Careers***. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996.

This book contains 14 research-based chapters on adult career development in the age of downsizing, outsourcing, and new career paths based. The relational approach to careers, which is the recognition that career development and growth take place in a context of interdependence and mutuality, forms the basis for the book.

Hansen, L. Sunny. ***Integrative Life Planning: Critical Tasks for Career Development and Changing Life Patterns***. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.

This book presents an integrative life planning (ILP) model for career professionals/counselors to use in helping their clients develop career and life pathways responsive to their own economic, family, spiritual, and cultural needs and also to community needs. The six critical tasks that constitute the ILP model's framework are finding work that needs doing in changing global contexts; weaving one's life into a meaningful whole; connecting family and work; valuing pluralism and inclusivity; exploring spirituality and life purpose; and managing personal transitions and organizational change.

Kahnweiler, William, and Otte, Fred L. "In Search of the Soul of HRD." ***Human Resource Development Quarterly*** 8, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 171-181.

For at least a decade, human resource development (HRD) journals and professional convention programs have discussed spirituality in the workplace, but the field of HRD does not seem to be fully aware of foundational theories nor has it developed many explicit prescriptive theories to guide practice. Authors suggest that further discussion in these areas, theory development and research on such theories are needed.

Laabs, Jennifer J. "Balancing Spirituality and Work." *Personnel Journal* 74, no. 9 (September 1995): 60-76..

Reviews the emergence of the spirituality-at-work trend and describes how it is finding a place in workgroups.

Leigh, Pamela. "The New Spirit at Work." *Training and Development* 5, no. 3 (March 1997): 26-33.

Reviews the new connection happening in many organizations and management that is resulting in a happier work force and real improvements in business goals. Examines how and why organizations creating a culture that holds meaning and purpose for their employees and the benefits.

McLaughin, Abe. "Seeking Spirituality...At Work." ***Christian Science Monitor***, March 16, 1998. http://csmonitor.com/durable/1998/03/16/us/us.2.html

Examines the movement toward spirituality in the workplace and the range of interests it serves.

Mirvis, Philip H. "'Soul Work' in Organizations." *Organization Science* 8, no. 2 (March-April 1997): 193-206.

The author uses his experience in a community building workshop to examine how community and spirituality are making their way into organizational life. How work is being rediscovered as a source of spiritual growth and connection to others is reviewed.

Moskowitz, Milton. "That's the Spirit." ***Mother Jones*** 22, no. 4 (July-August 1997) http://www.mojones.com/mother_jones/JA97/moskowitz.html

Moskowitz examines the issue of social responsibility in the workplace and suggests that soul is only the language of business when things are going well.

Srivastva, Suresh, and Cooperrider, David L. ***Appreciative Management and Leadership: The Power of Thought and Action in Organizations***. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990.

Appreciative inquiry is a management strategy that can be used by business leaders to nurture and develop human values in organizations. This book explores how the technique can be used to stimulate cooperation and foster creativity in working toward common organizational goals.

Organizational and Electronic Resources

Business for Social Responsibility, 609 Mission Street, 2nd Fl., San Francisco, CA 94105-3506; 415/537-0888; fax: 415/537-0889; http://www.bsr.org/

Spirituality in the Workplace List: http://www.au.spiritweb.org/Spirit/workplace-l.html

Work's AliVe: http://www.worksalive.com/

Developed with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under Contract No. RR93002001. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of OERI or the Department. ***Trends and Issues Alerts*** may be freely reproduced.

CENTER ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR EMPLOYMENT
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
1900 Kenny Road • Columbus, Ohio 43210-1090